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ABSTRACT

"Memoing," the "theorizing write-up of ideas about codes and their relationships as they strike...the analyst's momentary ideation based on data...with conceptual elaboration" (B. Glaser, 1978), is an important analytic tool used by qualitative researchers at all stages of the research process. The art form of collage is described as a contextualizing strategy in qualitative research that emulates memoing. In this paper an artist/graduate student and a teacher/researcher show how they embarked on a project to use collage as a contextualizing strategy, and the graduate student illustrates the process by examining her work in four collages done during a small research project on the creative decisions of artists. The four collages and accompanying commentary demonstrate how the ambiguity and multidimensionality of the collage medium set up conducive conditions for this analytic strategy. The collage process helps suspend linear thinking and allow elusive qualities of feelings and experiences to be addressed tangibly. The collages are attached. (Contains 30 references.) (SLD)

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Arts-based representation in qualitative research: Collage as a contextualizing analytic strategy

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As qualitative research gained more wide-spread acceptance and respect through the 1980's, the research conversation has changed. Initially, researchers had to spend inordinate amounts of energy to counteract criticism about the lack of validity and generalizability in qualitative research. Post modern thought that advanced the notion of multiple realities, and feminist work concerned with issues of ethics and voice in research, have helped to underscore the need for, and acceptance of, studying the particular in depth and in context (Donmoyer, 1990). As a result, discussions have become more exciting and turned inward, to concerns and issues of analysis and representation within this burgeoning form of work.

Representation has received the most attention. Textual representation, even in its more post modern, narrative forms, has been criticized for the inherent power structures it propagates, and for the ways it can appropriate the voices and stories of participants (Denzin, 1997). Simultaneously, there has been a realization that cognition and representation are inextricably linked (Eisner, 1997), and that different forms of representation can alter perceptibly one's understanding of phenomena. The convergence of these research conversations has resulted in increasing forays into alternative forms of qualitative writing and presentations (Ellis & Bochner, 1996) pushing the boundaries of what traditionally has been acceptable in our research communities. It is no longer unusual to find sessions, even at the most mainstream research conferences, in which results are presented in performances and other arts-based forms. The "how and what" discussion is gaining momentum and, not surprisingly, parameters are being advanced for what constitutes arts-based research. These include the creation of a virtual reality; the existence of ambiguity; the use of expressive, contextualized, and vernacular language; the promotion of empathy; the personal signature of the writer; and the presence of aesthetic form (Eisner & Barone, 1997, p. 73-80). Arts-based research draws together artist-educators looking for ways to document and research their work, and qualitative researchers experimenting with alternative representational forms (Butler-Kisber, 1998). There are diverging opinions about how much of an "artist" one must be to use alternative forms of representation. The worry is that sloppy forms of arts-based research may serve to undermine the methodological successes that qualitative researchers have achieved to date. This concern perhaps foreshadows the tone and emphasis that will feature strongly in future qualitative discussions.

Less attention has been paid to the potential of arts-based approaches in qualitative analyses. This in spite of the fact that it is recognized that thinking/understanding can be mediated in qualitatively different ways by different mediums. However, a useful discussion has been presented by Maxwell and Miller (1992). They argue the two major approaches used in qualitative analysis, categorizing and contextualizing, are seldom used together and that categorizing tends to be the favoured practice. Categorizing fractures and breaks the data into categories that helps to compare, contrast, and then sort data into larger patterns and themes. Contextualizing, on the other hand, is a more holistic approach to the analysis in which the researcher attempts to find relationships or links within the data to provide an understanding in context. They argue based on the work of Bruner (1986), and others before him, that these approaches exercise two very different thought processes. In categorizing, the researcher employs a logico-scientific (paradigmatic) way of thinking, emphasizing the nature of similarities and differences; in contextualizing, a narrative (syntagmatic) mode is used that emphasizes "contiguity-based relations...based on the relationships of these entities as members of an actual context, independent of their categorization," (Maxwell & Miller, 1992, p.2). Their thesis, illustrated with examples from Miller's work on adolescent friendships, advocates the complementarity of these approaches

and the deeper understanding that results when both modes are used. Miller used categorized matrices and narrative summaries as "analytic moves" in tandem to understand more fully the concept of friendship and the context of relationships among friends. She illustrated how matrices, produced from categorizing, removed important contextual aspects about the nature of the friendship relations which she discovered in her narrative summaries. Conversely, without the categorizing, she would have found herself, "locked into and limited to individual friendship stories," (Maxwell & Miller, 1992, p. 8). Furthermore, they argue that the present, increased use of narrative (and we would suggest other arts-based forms) in qualitative research is for the presentation of results not for analyses, and that most narrative presentations are the results of categorizing approaches to data analysis limiting the potential of what can be discovered when both modes are employed.

Memoing, "the theorizing write-up of ideas about codes and their relationships as they strike...a sentence, a paragraph, or a few pages...the analyst's momentary ideation based on data...with conceptual elaboration," (Glaser, 1978, p. 83-84), is an important analytic tool used by qualitative researchers at all stages of the research process. Initially, it may be a way of articulating beliefs and assumptions that are critical for understanding the perspective a researcher brings to the work (Maxwell, 1996). At other times throughout the study, memos can capture how the researcher is thinking (often unconsciously) about what is happening, and as a result (sometimes manifested in a sudden moment of insight), push the analysis further. Typically memos are written for the reflective purposes of the researcher and not an audience. However, they can become the basis for other analytic products such as displays, tables, concept maps or even a section of the report itself (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

We would suggest that memoing has inherent, contextualizing features because the process is used to facilitate more contiguous and holistic interpretations about what is being studied. Usually memos take the form of a concise, expository, piece of text. We are mindful, however, that a chosen means of representation conditions not only the researcher's manner of expression, but also his/her conceptual capacities and perceptual awareness. The content of knowledge is inextricably bound up with form and reliance on discursive language. Furthermore, it is limited by the conventions of a particular discipline, which may seriously restrict the researcher's ability to appreciate many of the qualities inherent in the research situation.

It is noteworthy that Elliot Eisner (1991), seeking a metaphor for emergent design in qualitative research, compares it to the creation of a collage in a fine art, as opposed to the architect or engineer's deliberate construction of a house from a pre-determined plan. As Eisner explains, a collage is a flexible composition that is assembled gradually and additively; as each new part is included, the intuitive relationships among the various parts are ordered and re-ordered until a convincing overall pattern or schema is achieved. In a well-made collage the good fit is not merely satisfying; it may border on the uncanny.

In the fine arts, collage has been described as the essential innovation of the 20th century, a means whereby established canons of representation may be critiqued, contradicted, or even subverted. Picasso questioned the significance of the medium of painting–a historical narrative of individual mastery-- by inserting a piece of (simulated) chair-caning print oilcloth into one of his paintings. By this blatant appropriation, he confronted an established, exclusive system of representation with the mass-produced reproductions of the new industrial age (Poggi, 1992).

The Surrealists, seeking to articulate and ultimately resolve the paradox of the conscious and subconscious parts of the mind, employed and greatly developed the "artless" medium of collage to help negate the dualistic character of accepted representations. To a highly literary group of artists and writers, a collage became a collection of images that could be freely arranged and manipulated almost as substitutes for words on a page: a form of spontaneous visual poetry. (Poling, 1996). Uncoupled from their original context and referents, the collage images were re-composed on a new plane, confounding traditional and easy linear readings; the new context assuming more readily the interior shapes of mental spaces (Spies, 1991). Max Ernst, for example, reunited the romantic illustrations of Victorian penny-novels with the grotesquerie of the mechanical and anatomical drawings of the same period; and suddenly these banal engravings were shadowed with the repressed desires and impulses of his own Victorian childhood.

The goals of collage have been developed and reinterpreted in the light of first existentialism and then postmodern practice; and its is important to stress this principle of progressive revelation, through which contemporary viewers and creators may dialogue meaningfully with the art of their culture (Steinberg, 1961; Chadwick, 1998). Moreover, the practice of collage has received serious attention from researchers in creativity as a readily accessible form of creative visualization and imaging (Dudek & Coté, 1994); while from an emotional as well as cognitive standpoint collage has been an important medium of expression in the repertoire of art therapists. Psychologically the spatial constructions of collage are particularly applicable to the theoretical concerns of the object-relations school of psychoanalysis, in which primal experiences of space and proximity, as well as language, are seen to play an essential role in the individual's relation to the world and others (Fuller, 1988).

In the work of Surrealists, collage was originally conceived as anti-aesthetic- that is resistant to the cultural conventions that bracket particular images as art, as creations of beauty that are worthy of extra-special attention; but historically their intention was not to deny the existence of a transcendent realm but rather to discover it in the most commonplace, and even rejected experiences. Currently, the aesthetic principle has for the most part reclaimed collage as an art form, even as the phenomenological investigation of aesthetic encounters has expanded and elaborated the definition of aesthetic experience. Here is where the teacher, the therapist and the qualitative researcher may discover an interface between their activities and the often esoteric area of the arts. Images, objects and texts which are designed and presented artistically are made to evoke aesthetic experiences in the viewer or reader- experiences initially characterized by a heightened emotional response and an awareness of personal values. Ideally however, at such moments of intensified attention and feeling, the participant may perceive the focal point of the experience- the so-called art object- as if uniquely estranged from the commonplace passage of daily routine. For a brief time a portion of the world is regarded holistically, as if it may pose a question, or present an opportunity, to which the viewer must respond with the full range of human thought and feeling; a challenge, minor or great, to re-define one's self and one's view of reality (Berleant, 1970). As an analytic memoing tool for the researcher, collage adds to the inherent contextualizing character of the aesthetic encounter the unique advantages of a highly flexible, critical medium with historical links to language.

Each artistic medium assumes a characteristic form, a particular set of spatial and temporal properties, through which it defines and addresses appropriate individual and cultural problems. Collage is a heterogenous, multivalent, multidimensional medium; it readily produces effects of spontaneity, simultaneity, ephemerality, fantasy, and disorientation. The capacity of collage to promote creative, metaphorical thinking and to trigger new affective responses may be attributed in part to the multiple, often divergent transformations which are performed upon the concepts or entities identified in the component images. Although the component images may be said to signify certain symbolic themes, these images must be combined, layered and organized on the plane of meaning of the collage- submitted, for example to the formal demands of an aesthetic vision, to the more holistic responses which are produced by the interaction of colours, shapes, and internal visual rhythms and balances (Spies, 1991). A collage is not defined by an initial mark or series of marks, the imagery being open to continuous revision and renewal. Whatever the original intention or idea of the collagist may be, these multiple levels of processing frequently assure that the result will be "made strange,"opening up the possibility for the emergence of tacitly or intuitively known content and the appearance of unexpected new associations. This enhanced awareness may occur at the time when the collage is made, or may be precipitated more fully in text when an interpretation is written. Increasing familiarity with the process can lead to a more prolonged or progressive succession of intuitive insights as wish-fulfilment fantasy gives way to the active consciousness of imagination.

So it is important to stress that the experience of the collagist is not simply one of random play or dreaming; although aspects of visual-spatial intelligence and even aesthetic appreciation have been linked to the primary processes (Fuller, 1988), it has long been asserted that language constructs both the conscious and the subconscious mind. Langer (1957) suggested that it is metaphor- an essentially verbal concept- which recruits new insights into the form of discourse, that reaches out to the unknown or unspeakable. The various structures of language which thus enrich our thinking are often strongly linked to visual imagery, and the production of novel images in words has been an important component in the study and testing of creativity (Khatena, 1984). Although the creator of a collage may sometimes seem to choose images almost at random, closer study may reveal mechanisms of metaphor, analogy, and allusion at work- processes which are well-known to elicit new awareness of hidden relationships and patterns, which may lead to their articulation. As in verbal imagery, it is elaboration which is provocative–and a cut-out photo or illustration comes ready-made with such specific elaboration, which may automatically be a source for divergent cognitive production. As Eisner (1991) pointed out, a drawing or photograph of a tree is rarely generic; while the word "tree" only points to a referent, a pictorial representation is at once "a" tree and a unique, specific tree.

The ensuing effort to develop a new context or narrative that may successfully encompass such diversity can lead to a collage which mediates between two poles of understanding–divergent but not random; convergent, but not literal; an alternative version of reality produced by the mutual interrogation of the cultural traditions of the verbal and the visual-spatial. Post modern practice has shifted from the simple deconstruction of oppressive narratives to the search for a means to write new ones, or to find new spaces for representation; and this may often take the form of synthesizing new mythic and allegorical structures from the ruins and fragments of information and history that are at our disposal (Chadwick, 1998) .It is our contention that a

collage, functioning as a form of analytic memo, exercises the kinds of non-linear and pre-conscious modes of thinking that are needed to facilitate contextualizing forms of analysis, potentially bringing tacit understandings about the researcher, the participants, and the context to the surface in insightful, useful, and different ways. This non-textual form of representation delays but then enriches a textual explication which might otherwise limit these possibilities.

In what follows we situate ourselves as artist/graduate student (Donna) and teacher/researcher (Lynn) and describe how we embarked on this project to examine the use of collage as a contextualizing strategy in qualitative research. Then Donna illustrates this process by examining her work in four collages done during a small research project. Finally, we discuss the potential and limitations of this kind of work and where it might go from here.

History of the project

Donna has been a working visual artist, in both fine and commercial art since the mid 1980's, earning a Bachelor of Fine Arts and a Diploma in Art Education before returning to McGill University for a Masters of Education; for the last four years she has been working on several long series of photomontage-type collages (created from found images from books and magazines). Lynn has been teaching at McGill for over two decades in the areas of language and literacy, and qualitative research methods. In the last few years her interest has been directed to arts-based qualitative research and the issues involved in this discipline.

We found ourselves together as graduate student and instructor in the fall of 1996 in a qualitative research methods course. The course required that students produce a research question and then design and conduct an appropriate mini-study of six to eight weeks' duration. Donna chose to conduct a study on how artists made their creative decisions in the production of artworks, particularly their own collages, with two participants in their own homes. The class was encouraged to consider the exploration of alternative forms of representation but initially Donna decided to confine her artistic interests to the issue of the research question itself. However, subsequently this changed as Donna describes below:

At the time my data collection commenced, I was continuing my own collage work in an independent study in studio art. By coincidence, I was working on several collages during the same weekend that a conflict developed between myself and one of the new participants in my research project. Although I was aware that my anxiety and tension influenced the imagery of the collages, it was only about two weeks later- after I had resolved the problem with Lynn's help- that I realized how vividly and dramatically this power struggle had been projected into a collage filled with devouring tigers. I brought the collage to Lynn's attention as a form of alternative representation of my research, and she proposed that it may have functioned as an analytic memo in visual art form.

While the majority of my analytic work in my ensuing research study was then done in written form, with Lynn's encouragement, I also continued to create a number of collage images that might reflect, clarify, and contextualize a variety of the issues that I pondered as the analysis progressed. At this time I also consistently composed textual interpretations of the collage content as it struck me. In the year following the completion of my study, I created, described, and interpreted my personal collage work extensively for presentation in two exhibitions, enabling me to return with Lynn to the earlier data and artifacts of my study to develop a more thorough and

sensitive appreciation of the analytic function of the collages in relations to my final report.

As a consequence of our investigations, we turn to the analysis of four of Donna's relevant collages, how the collage medium may both fulfill the role of the textual analytic memo and also precipitate new insights for the qualitative researcher. We will attempt to identify the specific functions of memoing which each collage has served, and also to determine how particular effects were achieved through qualities unique to the representational form of collage.

Collage I: "Yours and mine"

To provide the first example of the manner in which a variety of formal/spatial and symbolic mechanisms function in collage-making to provide analytic insight we turn to the tiger collage mentioned earlier that provided the original impetus for this paper. This collage entitled "Yours and Mine" was created by Donna in October 1996. In what follows, Donna walks through the production and analytic process.

I had met with one of my research participants in her home and, rather than following my original suggestions for the completion of one of a series of brief, spontaneous collages, she had asserted her right to work more slowly and deliberately, causing me difficulty in collecting sufficient data in the available time. My discomfort had increased as I later listened to the audio-taped recording of the event. The following day, my participant telephoned to say she was highly excited about changes she had made to her work. Without wishing to defuse her aggressive enthusiasm, I requested if she would agree to return to a quickly-completed collage for at least one of our remaining sessions. She responded by saying that she felt I was imposing my way of working on her.

The collage which I created that weekend would later be entitled "Yours and Mine."As is my usual method, I began by selecting a number of magazine photos and cut-out book illustrations from a large file which I had amassed; I made my choices intuitively or aesthetically, avoiding logical deliberation and self-censorship. I chose and cut out an evocative image of a young woman kneeling to feed lion or leopard cubs from a baby bottle. I placed this photo in a Badlands, rocky desert setting and added two accompanying larger tigers, manipulating the images so that they wove around the woman's figure like cats stroking themselves against her. I then began incorporating this core imagery into a larger background, emphasizing an overall colour scheme of oranges, warm browns, and darker browns.(Often I establish a background from large landscape photos before adding many smaller figures.) Although I was making my selections largely according to colour, I acknowledged the distinctiveness of the nurse-tiger analogy by placing it centrally in a tall vertical format. Then, taking my cue from the woman/tiger duo, I placed at the top a variation on this theme in the form of a proportionately huge tiger head peering through a screen of leaves to confront a nude female torso to its right. Though headless and faceless, the woman expresses feeling through her gestures. She appears, in the context, to be covering her bare breasts protectively with her hands. I then picked up on the expressiveness of her hands and repeated these in two other places, putting a hand of medium scale near the tiger's eye, perhaps with an intent to conceal or block, and golden hands/gloves from a suit of armour at the bottom border to restrain the tiger who advances from alongside the nurse. The desert setting suggested the inclusion of a gnarled tree and withered autumn leaves, while a contrast to this imagery, both in colour and possible meaning, was introduced through the extension of the green foliage which

appeared in the tiger head picture. I experienced excitement as I searched out matching green pieces of jungle leaves from other photographs, superimposing them as a material layer atop the greenery which was an integral part of the tiger in the forest, and putting them in front of other parts of the collage just as the leaves in the tiger photo are read as being "in front" of the tiger's head.

Before interpreting the component images symbolically, attention should be directed to the obvious importance of colour, space, and, implicitly time, that create the visual context in which the represented issues are grounded. The effect of colour in producing a mood cannot be completely dissected, due to the complex interaction of different colours, but the overwhelming dominance of orange, a hot, visually advancing colour, seems to assist in creating an atmosphere of tension, even aggression. Orange carries ready associations of creative fire and fecundity, yet, traditionally, orange has a negative connotation as a degraded form of red (as the tiger is the ignoble counterpart of the lion). Perhaps, its lesser strength thus accounts for the association of orange with passion in its more destructive aspects, such as lust, egoism, and power-seeking; it has consequently been suggested by some art therapists that the common aversion to orange is a reflection of the discomfort which surrounds issues of power (Cirlot, 1962; Kellogg, 1977). Not every viewer or artist, of course, will bring this metaphorical baggage to the image, but I wish to stress how an outstanding formal element sets a tone or provides a context from which signification will readily flow in a particular direction.

Note also how a dramatic compression of space and time connects the woman feeding the cubs to the confrontation of the tiger head and the female nude. Read narratively, the nourishing woman ironically becomes the victim of the aggressor she has nourished, whom she must now refuse. The large-scale of the upper figures, brought closer to the foreground plane, suggests nearness also in time in comparison to the more distant scene below, but all are collapsed into the virtually simultaneous viewing time of a single spatial presentation, increasing the effect of shock as vision repeatedly flows from one configuration to the other. Because the woman and the cubs clearly foreshadow the nude-tiger confrontation, the shock of the compression is more strongly felt, and more apt, as it is never beyond the possibility of anticipation. The existence of a more regular flow of time, outside of the crisis situation, is related to more peripheral elements such as the leaves which place the event in the real context of an autumn which will march inexorably into winter.(Should I "leave" this situation behind?") Despite this extreme tension, the spatial function of the green leaves, the colour of which might carry suggestions of hope or relief, through which I was able to alter subtly the existing "dimensions" of the image by playing with aspects of illusory versus "real" space, indicates the potential to redefine the situation imaginatively, even if in a manipulative way (the spaces among figures, constitutive of their relationships, may be critically changed by small but effective displacements.)

However, this discussion of aesthetic qualities, while providing important validation, is primarily a later explicative footnote to the impact which the collage had upon my feeling and thinking about my research project at the time it was created. Whereas I have taken advantage of later reflection upon the visual art document to delve more thoroughly into the origins of its effects, I would now like to describe more simply how the collage served me as an analytic memo at the time, given my existing level of interpretation. After Lynn had discussed with me the possibility that my collage was an alternative form of analytic memo, she asked me to speak briefly

to our class about my discovery, and at that time I composed a few paragraphs expressing my reactions to the collage imagery, and to the situation with my participant:

> *I was feeling pretty out-of-control or resentful because, rightly or wrongly, I feared my subject would eventually want to dictate the content of my paper as well. Yet I had known this person for a while- I knew she had recently had some difficult experiences...that could have made her ego fragile or distorted. She had to prove herself. And maybe I was over-reacting from an egoistic position myself... My collage...is a jungle. It depicts the ambiguity that is present, where it is hard to know who is the aggressor and who is the defender; as indeed, I still don't know if my ego or hers was the real source of the difficulty...In the end, I discussed my situation with Lynn and terminated my work with that person.*

I hypothesized from these early comments that initially the image fulfilled a repository or cathartic role. Art therapists have theorized that images produced in the context of an important relationship may serve a mediating or "scapegoat" function, providing an alternative object upon which relationship issues may be projected. Feelings thus projected onto the artwork are situated and clarified, and the artist-creator can experience a sense of release and greater objectivity, even when a complete analysis is not undertaken (Schaverien, 1990). An analytic memo may likewise enable the researcher to externalize conflicts and thus remove mental blocks. However, my collage provided me a greater opportunity for empathy with a variety of feeling-states (Wakefield, 1994). The anger, guilt, and fear which accompanied my issues with the participant could be projected into the image in a form which would preserve both their intensity, simultaneity, and essential ambivalence (the paradox of being both victim and aggressor). Identifying with the various figures, and experiencing in their scale differences the sense of the ego growing larger and smaller, I could escape precise designations of antagonist and protagonist. Consequently, an alternative was presented to the indecisive bind that would have ensued from a linear series of projections of blame, and I was able to seek a solution in a more impersonal but compassionate manner.

This interpretation is related largely to the dichotomies of the collage symbols, and to the prevailing atmosphere of tension and conflict which colours and close juxtapositions create. The projection, dramatization and perhaps partial resolution of the particular confrontation concerned largely exhausted my ideation concerning the collage at the time it was made. However, the vertically-oriented image with its tightly-crowded foreground plane, does not suggest that I was yet able to be "open-minded." My concerns about personal narcissism or even punitive anger persisted throughout my study, and this inner conflict around the question of "indwelling" (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994) became a theme which continued through the ensuing collages. This series of "analytic memos" in which my reflections and ideas were built up and modified as the data unfolded, moved my analysis forward. The accompanying text tended to focus particularly on the threat of bias and the collages became important elements of self-critique to preserve balance in the analytic process and the writing of the report.

Collage II: "The staircase"

Once my data collection was underway with two new participants, I created another collage with deliberate intent to illustrate my experience of entering my sites, an experience which I described concurrently in a narrative text and shared with Lynn. The resulting image, perhaps more literal than my personal collages, depicts the early progress of my study as the ascent of a staircase, a series of steps to be climbed to attain a distant goal. The stone staircase, flanked by a wall on the viewer's left, rises to the colonnaded facade of a Greek temple, beyond which the starry skies of outer space from a backdrop. A variety of figures, human and animal, stand on the steps or occasionally seem to be descending them; an octopus, and a pairing of a baby and bulldog, loom up front close to the foreground plane at the base of the stairs, almost intruding into the viewer's space. Flying over the staircase is a flock of small macaws, only one of which alights on the hand of a male statue on the staircase. The rest ascend to fly off into the remote distance. The viewpoint is uncharacteristically unified and perspectival, and in my later reading I came to appreciate more fully the egocentric presuppositions inherent in these representations, in which the world is seen to converge on one privileged observer. When writing an interpretation of this collage about two weeks later, I predictably dwelt on my feelings of anxiety and self-consciousness in the face of the new and formidable demands of qualitative research. I focussed largely on the critique of my own mental processing which the collage presented:

> *Soon after I had finished writing the entry paper, I looked over my completed collage...I sensed that the imagery was presenting me with an admonition... Being by nature a more whimsical, eccentric or prejudicial thinker than a grounded and logical one, I questioned whether I went philosophically too far afield in the entry paper...my grasp on the realities of my study was not really so firm...I think the series of parrots flying above the staircase could embody the process of thought- abstracting, theorizing, universalizing. Flying into outer space in fact! Parrots suggest a mercurial quality of intellect...mindless imitation or repetition...A positive polarity to the symbol being the capacity to speak truly, even profoundly, without 'knowing' what one is saying...*

In the ensuing portion of this memo I reproached myself for "playing" with ideas and remaining too superficial, and I particularly emphasized a peripheral element, a peregrine falcon perched on the wall, as a symbol of the "critical faculties of the mind, intense perception or concentration" which should make the landing on the arm of the Hermetic statue (falconer) rather than the "imposter" parrot. Interestingly, I failed to pick up on the negative side to this icon, the capacity of the overly serious, logical mind to kill the insights of creativity and imaginative play. Despite my omissions, I derived from my collage a valid reflexive critique; a tendency to veer from the concrete details of my study to the romance of abstract ideas, especially received ones. This remained a persistent problem for me. However I believe my original memo too readily glosses over my depiction of my participants in the collage. Rather negatively, I commented that I could make "a cynical case" for identifying each figure on the steps with a prospective participant; for example, a "Bashful Beauty" appellation is tagged to a woman artist who declined to participate

for fear her work would be "scrutinized." More positively, the duality of the baby bulldog, which immediately confronts the viewer, supplies a telling metaphor about Phyllis, with whom I spent the most time at this point and upon whose story my final report was largely based. Later collages related to my work with Phyllis return to similar, Janus-like configurations. This mask-like juxtaposition foreshadows my later reflections on the contradictory aspects of Phyllis' character, which would become important in understanding her motives for her self-expression. Here the collage is depicting in visual form my beginning awareness of a research problem that I later tried to articulate and analyse.

The collage provided a reflection upon my continuing difficulty as a new researcher to deal with the temptation of the superior power relation and to achieve empathy with my subjects. I was able to pick up indications from the image that paying attention to the immediate presences on the steps would be of first importance, while idealized goals would prove problematic. Certainly the remoteness, chilliness, and unreality of the atmosphere of the image suggested a sense of alienation and unease in a world suddenly made uncomfortably strange, in which well-known and even automatic ways of dealing with and perceiving other people and events have suddenly been called into question. Most of the image is composed of nearly monochromatic earth tones; only the parrots are brightly coloured as if more "real." This is also the colour of late November with the descent of early evening darkness and the pressure to organize time as the end of a year approaches; hence the excessive rationality of the space in contrast to the perplexing parade of strangers. At the top of the crowning temple, which interrupts a passage to the infinite, there is a tiny detail of two wrestling figures which seemed to predict struggles: those I would have in separating my ideations from the participants' reality, and in reconciling the ambitious and seemingly, never-ending work of the student qualitative researcher with the need to "make" that grade. (Steps are "graded.") This visual memo suggested that I was grappling with the perception of progress as being both linear and transcendent, and of my subjects as being obstacles to overcome. The foreboding quality of the overall image, and its slight internal incoherence, in which the figures are not well integrated spatially with one another or the background, I believe can be understood in the light of my anxiety, mistrust, and denial. Perhaps the proper visual context into which the parts could fit had not yet been symbolically realized. However, the collage as analytic memo pointed to tacit understandings that were being gestated and precipitated in isolated images that later offered insights into larger patterns.

Collage III: "The spy"

As I wrote my research report, I created a major collage later entitled "The Spy," which I initiated with the conscious intention to illustrate residual problems in the resolution of my conclusions. This collage particularly concerned my relationship to Phyllis, her apparent relationship to me, and my inner conflicts about possible bias in my attitude toward her. I had met with Phyllis in her home, and joined with her in creating artwork in her own kitchen, surrounded by her traditional paintings and handicrafts. The following extract from my journal notes encapsulates the kernel idea for "The Spy:"

Look at the appropriation idea. Show woman in kitchen transforming her surroundings, even her daily chores, into exotica; ordinary items become more exciting counterparts...an Old Master with some altered bits for example.

I constructed the collage from numerous images that bore a relatively direct descriptive reference to elements or objects from the research data. For example, the kitchen table and chairs, the full paper bags (groceries or art supplies), and the linoleum floor are closely linked to my recorded descriptions and photographs of Phyllis' actual home. Phyllis often mentioned how her pet cat became the model for her painted tigers: hence the tiger-headed cat who lies behind the ordinary sitting cat . In our last session we worked together on pictures of tropical birds and our conversations often mentioned commonplace parakeets and pigeons. Commenting on my collage shortly after its completion, I wrote:

This collage depicts more clearly my relationship as participant-observer to my main subject, Phyllis. She was an amateur painter and many traditional genres of imagery- still life, portrait, landscape- are included in the collage. She sits at her kitchen table, absentmindedly painting right on it...I would seem to be the anxious woman in the coat who is directed (by God?) to attend to this other person. In the background, shadowy, fluttering birds again express the paradox of liberty glimpsed from within confinement.

At this point in my analysis, I was considering how relatively standardized genres of representation became individualized, either through apparent creative choice or through expediency, I noted in my report that a transformative continuum seemed to develop leading from everyday life and passing into aesthetic representations. This was expressed in rather eccentric ways as cats became tigers, old socks with sport logos became sweaters for a collegiate Barbie, the tea in Phyllis' cup became the exact colour needed in her painting, and Phyllis became, by a similar equation, one in the company of Matisse. In my collage "The Spy " I have in part depicted this strange confluence, on the plane of art, of Phyllis' day-to-day personal reality and the exalted traditions of culture. The intrusions from the homemaker's world, however, often seemed to constitute the major part of the creative invention or originality to be found in Phyllis' work, coupled with the insouciance underlying her love for courting "accidents" and daring "cover-ups" in her painting. But this indomitable free spirit, like the blurred images of the flying doves that appear in the corners of the collage as a near-hidden lower image layer, is glimpsed as a partly-denied shadow hidden quickly behind a more ordinary identity that Phyllis also needed to preserve.

This collage, in contrast to the earlier ones discussed, takes the form of a long horizontal rectangle- a "landscape" format that is inherently more stable and grounded in the physical world than the earlier, tall vertical ones. There is a visual sense of panning cinematically across the collage, often going from close-up to long-shot; movement flows in an inverse right to left direction, guided by the gaze of the standing "Spy"(the researcher as outsider) and the pointing finger of God. Changes in scale and super-impositions give an impression of repeated shifts of vision and multiple viewpoints; at one moment the representation of the "real" appears close, but

then the simulations of the reproduced paintings leap forward as if equally part of this interior reality. For example, note how the still-life behind Phyllis' table looms larger than the flower vase upon it, entering the foreground space. This image crowds against the "guiding light" of the street lamp, combining with the totemic parakeets to divide the gaze of the standing woman, who may also look into the distant Renaissance landscape behind her. Near the bottom right, a cut-in fragment of a pastel portraitist at work abruptly fractures the picture plane; note how this artist colours the eye of his subject with green. Pictures are within pictures here; one image partially covers another, and consequently, one can only glimpse what may go on beneath. Windows open not onto an external world, but onto to other representations, for example, the painted sunset. A forward-backward movement in space thus complements and complicates the panoramic horizontal scanning as a number of well-established narratives- house and home, the fairy-tale animal, Divine Intervention, nature as landscape, the still life, and the portrait- are juxtaposed, layered, and interwoven. There is an implication that narratives can be read allegorically, through other narratives, like the personal or imaginative stories that Phyllis would integrate into her conventional pictures of landscapes, grapes and apples, and exotic birds.

I was approaching the conclusion that Phyllis had chosen to pursue her art, what she "enjoyed most,"with a single-mindedness that distinguished her from many of the women of her class who came from similar backgrounds as wives, mothers, homemakers, pink-collar workers, and community volunteers. Her experience with other amateur artists had taught her that "each person has their own way of working," that art can demonstrate each person's unique identity. Yet she still seemed to need the recognition and approval of the group of men and women from which she came, many of whom would then constitute her immediate audience. By comparison, intellectual figures might be considered suspicious and oppressive. Because Phyllis still identified strongly with the commonsense philosophy of her working class community, she had to deal with the problem of justifying her sense of separateness, her apparent determination to define her life through painting, against the predictable accusations of selfishness or irresponsibility. She spoke constantly of "having fun" through her art, and despite a resistance to the romantic concept of artist-genius, she would invoke it occasionally for self-justification.

My data revealed that Phyllis leaned heavily on a limited store of accepted representational formulae and painting "tricks" that could make impulsive play look like "work." And she worked, or played impulsively, courting and often resolving "accidents" or drastically "covering up" a passage of inadequate painting. Often she wondered, and occasionally fussed over, how to reconcile mimetic requirements with formal demands- her own sense of aesthetic rightness- or her desire for imaginative or narrative invention. She would shift her image, after the fact, from context to context, from "serious work" to "a picture for children"in order to re-evaluate her artistic decisions or mistakes. In what I described as her "seizing the opportunity to please everyone," by juggling and reconciling conflicting values, Phyllis tended to resort to the invocation of magic- sometimes by sleight of hand and deception to hide her impulsiveness from the audience; but sometimes by reference to a kind of faith in magical powers of "accidental" opportunities and changes, as if these might intervene on behalf of the artist in her favourite pursuit. The purpose of this mild deceit baffled me, and since I was studying her process of decision-making in her artistic endeavours, I grappled with how to deal with my observations of her art-making and an emic appreciation of her belief in magic, for example:

...as Phyllis remained doubtful about the presentableness of her image, ...she continued to explore the story-telling mode further, considering a contextual change which would shift her image into a child's storybook situation:
Phyllis: Oh, mine isn't necessarily a parrot. I could always give him another name. Make him something else.
Donna: Some fanciful bird.
Phyllis: Um-hmm (pause), a gollywanda, or something like that.

When I had later called Phyllis a week or two after our final session, she told me how she had left her collage of the parrot out in view in her kitchen and, as she passed by, had gradually invented stories to accompany the image. Soon afterwards, when I was making arrangements with Phyllis to pick up her work, she explained that she had added some fuzzy material to the bird's head and written a children's story to accompany the picture:

Poor Willie Mugwump was feeling sad. All the other birds in his part of the jungle had beautiful feathers and beautiful-sounding names. Willie had some pretty feathers and a soft red chest. His eyes were big and black but his head was flat and ordinary so he kept hiding behind the big leaves on the trees so that the other birds would not laugh at him. Sometimes the leaves were scratchy on the top of his head but he got used to it.
One day, when there were no other birds around, Willie hopped down from his tree to have a drink of cool water from the jungle pool. As he sat on a branch above the clear pool, he looked down and saw his reflection, and was so surprised his black eyes grew bigger and bigger. The leaves that had been scratching the top of his head had made red feathers stand up and become fluffy. He felt wonderful. He wouldn't have to hide from the other birds any more and he decided to change his name. From that time on he was called the Red-Crested Mugwump.

In this story, I believe Phyllis' artistic process becomes the metaphor for an ongoing process of self-actualization, one that is perceived as a wishful, fairy-tale transformation. However, it is clear that the beliefs underlying Phyllis' convictions, and her creative decisions, could not be eked out entirely from a dualistic viewpoint. Living in a home already overflowing with her production of landscapes and still-life paintings, she insisted on her right to the "fun"of painting as if it were a true liberation from working-class drudgery and boredom.

As I studied my collage, adjusting to the new context of this at-first disorienting image, it helped to clarify my thinking. Perhaps I had had reason to envy Phyllis' faith and therefore had featured a woman's eye being shadowed with green. I now note how I exploited the plasticity and fluidity of the medium by arranging, recombining, and manipulating the images not only on the contiguous plane but also on the several levels of physical layers, developing a dialogic form. The specific couplings of the everyday and the exotic- the cat wearing the "mask" of the tiger, the

naked queen in the homemaker's kitchen, the street pigeons and the captive, then flying doves- are symbolic keys to a theme of concealment and potential transformation. The difficulty of establishing a rational context tends in itself to produce an air of mystery, and this mode is then supported by the presence of the Creator God who appears perhaps as a *deux ex machina* orchestrating a mythical universe that might otherwise be seen as random. The formal logic of the image adds weight to this conclusion- God's pointing finger establishes a unifying visual direction amid the maze of compositional elements. The collage helped me to consider how Phyllis, attempting to reconcile conflicting values as she created her art, may have required the support of an irrational, magical, but benevolent universe that could encourage her in what other people might see as a pointless endeavour. But there is a reflexive aspect here as well. The Godhead also represents moral authority and conscience- the respect that the spying outsider owes to the woman exposed to her gaze. The pictorial space is constantly fragmented, punctuated, and interrupted by competing representations, making the plane on which all things meet inevitably paradoxical; how does the researcher at once *look at* the reality of the Other but also *see through it*? The imagery of the flying doves- the bits on the periphery, apparently in constant motion, superimposed by multiple exposures, and eerily highlighted as if X-rayed- became significant. I was able to diverge from the seemingly banal, descriptive details about birds that were discussed in the data, and use my "found images," in the new unity of the collage, as a clue to the entire analytic process which moved me toward the resolution of the results.

Collage IV: "The importance of context"

The title which I gave to the next collage, "The Importance of Context," emphasizes not only the content of my conclusions, but also the analytical process which led me to those conclusions. This image is less an interrogation of my attitudes than an elegant, evocative summary of my results, an expression of the manner in which the reality of the participant and that of the researcher have been integrated. It also illuminates the intuitive processes whereby I have moved conceptually from particular incidents to more encompassing conclusions, while indicating directions for even more thorough analysis.

In several interesting anecdotes, Phyllis had referred to frames and framing:

> *Phyllis tells me, "When I was framing one of my paintings for the last exhibition, I was having trouble getting these things in at the back. I was trying to get them started with a nail- it just wasn't going anywhere. Next Michael said, 'I'll do it.' and he gave one wham! And he went right through to this part. I didn't know what to do- I didn't want to just throw out the frame. And I took some sugar- mixed it up well- painted all the way around- and people said, 'Where did you get that unusual frame?' And I didn't tell them...it's surprising what you can salvage when you want to."*

> *Phyllis tells me, "I shouldn't give away all my secrets- like the frame." Then she puns, "It's my artistic license- I'm going to have it framed."*

Intrigued by these data, I chose to use floating and sometimes intersecting frames as a prominent

motif in the central area of the collage, in order to represent the multiple contexts or identifications that conditioned Phyllis' work- the romantic fairytale castle or pleasure palace stands on the left, the demanding audience of the amphitheatre on the right. The earlier figures of parrots and cats are joined by little girls on a swing and a merry-go-round horse, depicting the small playful impulses that weave around and through the possibly confining frames.

The layout of the collage resembles a concept map (Maxwell, 1996), given the intersecting boxes of the frames and directional flow of movement indicated by the birds, animals, and children. The presence of the landscape backgrounds hints, however, that this image is at once both map and territory. My first idea, as I planned this collage, had been to use a faux wood-grain vinyl to frame the whole image. I later rejected this notion in order to limit the size of the collage, but perhaps there was also a tacit rejection of closure involved in this decision. Framing is the final step that legitimizes and certifies the work of an artist, that proclaims to the audience that perfection has been achieved. The frame thus becomes in itself a metaphor for the completed work. But there are no completed artworks here- only frames; the masterpieces that appear in "The Spy" are gone. The pictures-within-pictures have been replaced by transparencies. Indeed, the pictures themselves are, in this construct, virtually expedient. They are mere frames among which the creative mind plays, a complex series of traps which the artist negotiates.

Framed like a portrait within a larger frame where the magic circle of indwelling encloses an enchanted cottage, the woman in white is here both Phyllis and myself, all too human instruments acting as artists and qualitative researcher. She gazes at the birds and animals (and the audience) with a dispassion that may be tinged with disappointment, as she sees through the representations. Between self-gratification and the approval of others, the artworks are excuses for inspired play- but stories so carefully framed! Yet this "innocent" woman with hands off- she holds them behind her back- looks out from within the collage, from within the framework. Through the metaphorical possibilities of visual order, her position can be reversed from that of outsider to insider. At the far margins of meta-cognition, the engagement and potential resolution of a narcissistic difficulty, the problem of the "mirror image," is implied. As participant-observer, I may have assumed a role and a value in Phyllis' world, just as she had in mine.

My conclusion was, in part, that a great deal of supposed creative decision-making was not so creative at all. Pre-determined standards governed many decisions, and contingency dictated others; the creativity demonstrated by my participant(s) seemed mainly to be inserted, often impishly, in space of elaboration and repair and even rationalization. This collage, however, adds to my seriousness and pessimism, the lightness of spirit and humour which also truly qualifies the creative process, which permits such magic as may occur. The woman's gaze is less judgmental than ironic; what would otherwise be cast as mere bad faith is an often delightful game, even when it is played out at precipitous heights and when some of the maze opens into infinity.

But the collage not only summarized a complex web of relationships complete with their varied dimensions of feeling, it also drew out of a descriptive, categorized item of data- the frame as object- a rich store of the tacit meaning which was embedded in Phyllis' discussion of the frame. By manipulating and diversifying the basic visual image of the frame and trying it out metaphorically in different spatial relationships, against different "backgrounds," in a narrative with "new characters," I was able to tease out interpretation from description and add further depth to both my categorizations and the reported results. However I may have succeeded in analyzing

creative process through discursive language, it was only with prolonged contemplation of the collage form and content that I could fully articulate the intuitive hunches that underlay my analytic process and governed the ultimate formulation of my conclusions. The more complex and contradictory "reality" appears, the more it may demand an approach through a dialectical, non-linear form that is inherently, even materially, predicated upon flux, change, and multiplicity. Looking back once more at the collage, I see the liminal glow of sunrise/sunset that colours the far background landscape, qualifying the near inexpressible condition of the researcher who must attempt somehow to both inhabit and interpret her participant's reality (Jackson, 1995; p.36).

Discussion

We have suggested that in qualitative data analysis a collage can operate as a contextualizing strategy emulating memoing in ways that open up the data further and permit insights and a deeper understanding of what is transpiring. Donna's four collages and accompanying commentary have illustrated how the ambiguity and multidimensionality of the collage medium set up conducive conditions for this analytic strategy. The collage process helps to suspend linear thinking and allows elusive qualities of feelings and experiences to emerge and be addressed tangibly. Part of this happens as a result of the need to focus, at least initially, on the formal aspects of composition and colour. With meaning then relegated temporarily to an ancillary function, thinking becomes more flexible. The actual manipulation and construction of space that is done in the layering, weaving, and the juxtaposition of scale and perspective within the collage, serves to push the boundaries of possibility and alter the viewpoint of the researcher to confront, for example, hidden issues of bias, or to use these visual metaphors to underscore and elaborate relationships among the data.

In a sense the collage as memo parallels the qualitative experience of the reality under study, reinstates it in a new form; a restored portrait of the internalized world that the researcher has created from the participant's reality. Like other contextualizing methods, it heals the violence that the fragmentation of categorizing has effected, in the act of reconstituting a collection of fragments into a whole. In the thought of the Surrealists, which underlies collage methods, the interior reality took precedence over the outer, confounding ordinary logic; as Rosalind Krause has noted, the world itself then became a lexicon of symbolic images presenting itself to be read (quoted in Freeman, 1989). Potential distortions should therefore be addressed by sensitive articulation. But on a deeper philosophical level there is the difficulty that employing collage for analytic purposes partly negates the integrative effect of the aesthetic experience, for a written interpretation then substitutes a partial explanation for the holistic experience of an alternative reality (Berleant, 1971). Certainly gestational lapses of time are often required to elicit the most insight and content from the images, and there is value in keeping the analytic interpretation and synthetic collage-making aspects separate. Yet even when an individual's experience of the creative process is satisfying, the resulting image may seem so intimate or interior that analysis must be deferred indefinitely, and then one can only infer indirectly and anecdotally that the process of collage-making actually altered the thinking and feeling of the artist. The multivalence of the collage medium, however, presents the potential for successive and multiple interpretations over time, even as the artist-researcher's horizon changes.

More specific practical questions as to the value of collage as an alternative memoing strategy arise both from the perspective of artist and non-artist researcher. Whereas the artist may be trained in the media, forms and genres of visual art, adherence to learned schema may conceivably block insight; the medium of collage can counteract this tendency because it de-emphasizes the importance of style, but there may yet be an inclination to revert to favoured imagery without grappling with issues of representation. Photomontage is particularly susceptible to the reproduction and even celebration of mass-media messages; published images are far from being value-neutral, transparent signifiers. Conversely, the non-artist may fail to acknowledge or recognize any objective, iconographic basis for his/her representations and so find interpretation a meaningless game of "reading into " and fantasizing. To become comfortable with the discovery, expression, and resolution of problems and conflicts within a visual medium, and to move from personal metaphors to more encompassing philosophical symbolism, usually requires repeated creative encounters and often the production of a body of work. This is not a task that can be easily pursued concurrent with a mountain of other analytic tasks.

Our work with other graduate students confronted with the demands and dilemmas of qualitative analysis has been encouraging. Admittedly, for some, there is no latent proclivity for a leap into this visual medium. For others, the possibility, when presented, provides an appealing challenge/alternative, and frequently, a welcomed release from the confinement they feel when immersed in their data. The private, reflective realm of collage as analytic memo removes the inhibitions of the "non-artist":

> *At this point in my analysis I was beginning to feel somewhat overwhelmed. The process of going through five weeks of observations, two formal interviews and various artifacts felt enormous. I decided one way to work past this barrier was to create an analytic memo concerning my attitude toward the project as well as what I say emerging from the data. The idea of making a collage had not occurred to me until Donna visited our class on October 30...The process was very productive in that it helped me to realize that I need to look at my data from another angle while at the same time it was a useful exercise to release some built up frustration.* (Monica, December 1997)

It also minimizes the questions of quality that merit discussion when arts-based representation is directed to a wider audience. It is worth noting that de-emphasis on artistic attractiveness may encourage the choice of eccentric, discordant or humourous images, which supply rich analogies and increase the emotional impact of the collage and the immediacy of insight. To avoid methodological carelessness, (Eisner & Barone, 1997) has proposed that researchers experimenting with alternative representations might best do so with the guidance of an artist-researcher. Donna is now conducting a seminar/workshop on collage techniques with several graduate students and teachers, as part of a research study for her Master's degree. She is introducing her participants to the collage medium and collecting data on their impressions, insights, and new discoveries as they attempt to reconfigure their own issues in collage. We believe that this and similar studies will be a source of richer information on the creative and

analytic processes involved, and will lead to more diversified and collaborative methods for the practice of collage as an analytic form in qualitative research.

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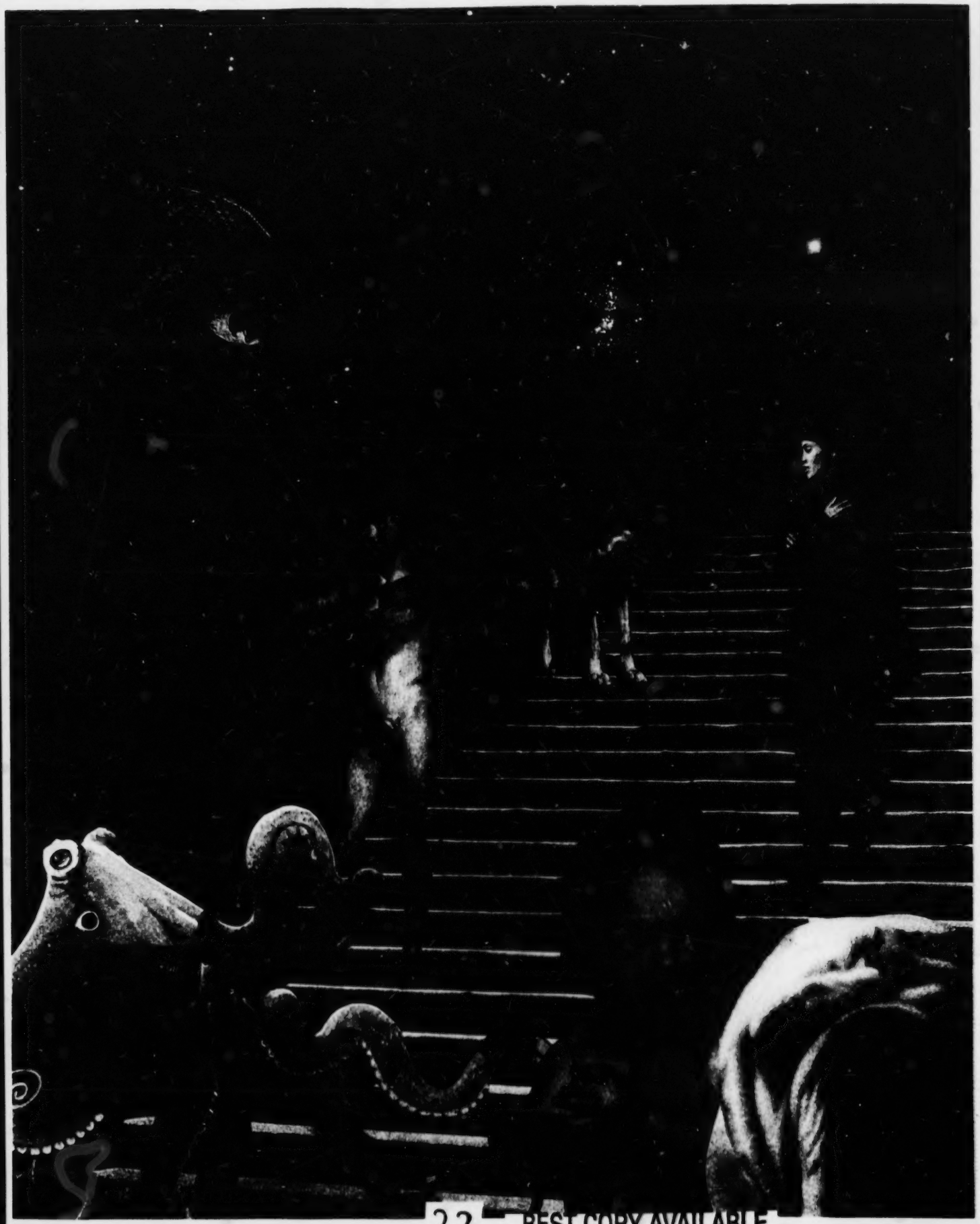

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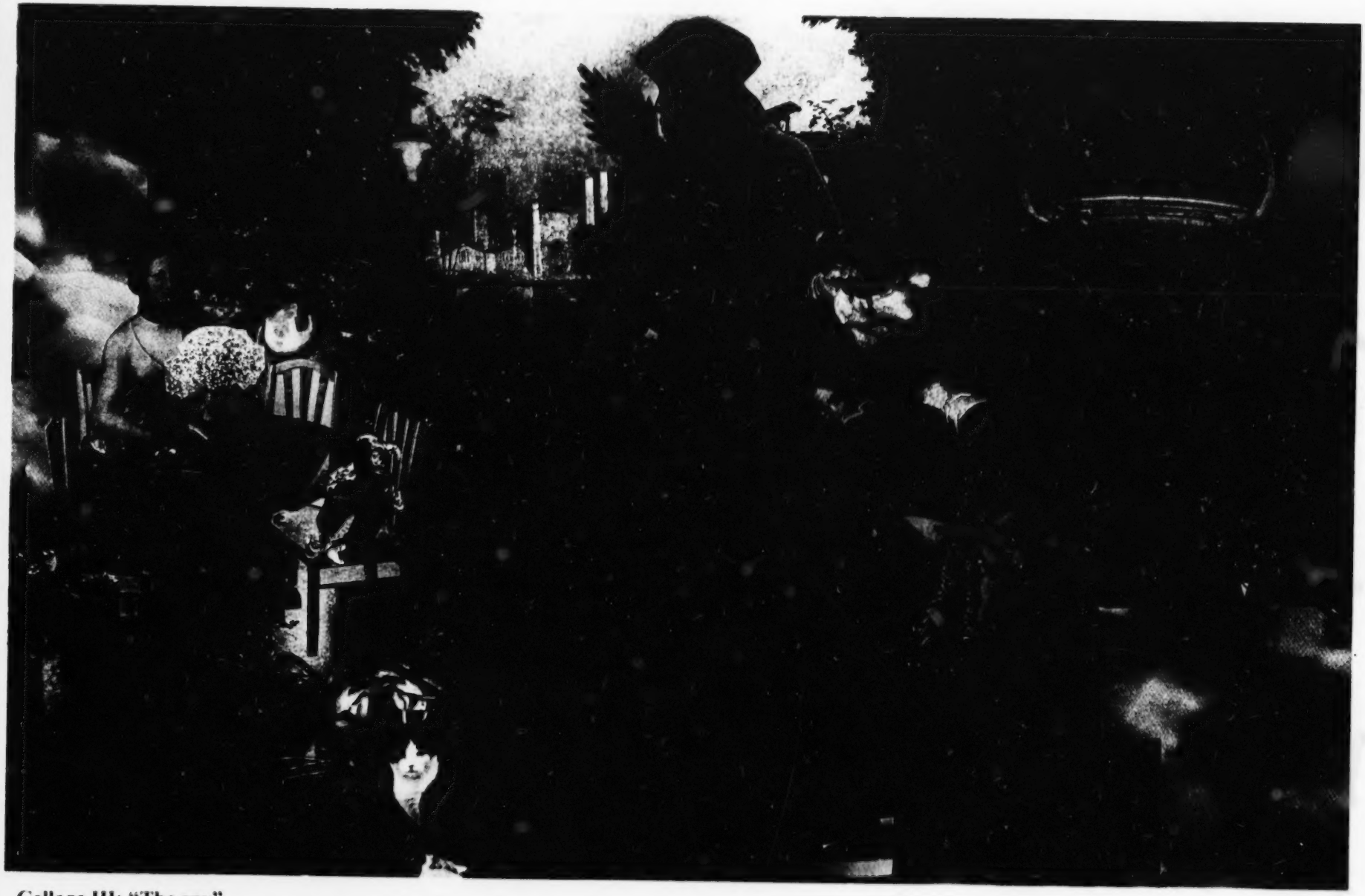

Collage III: "The spy"

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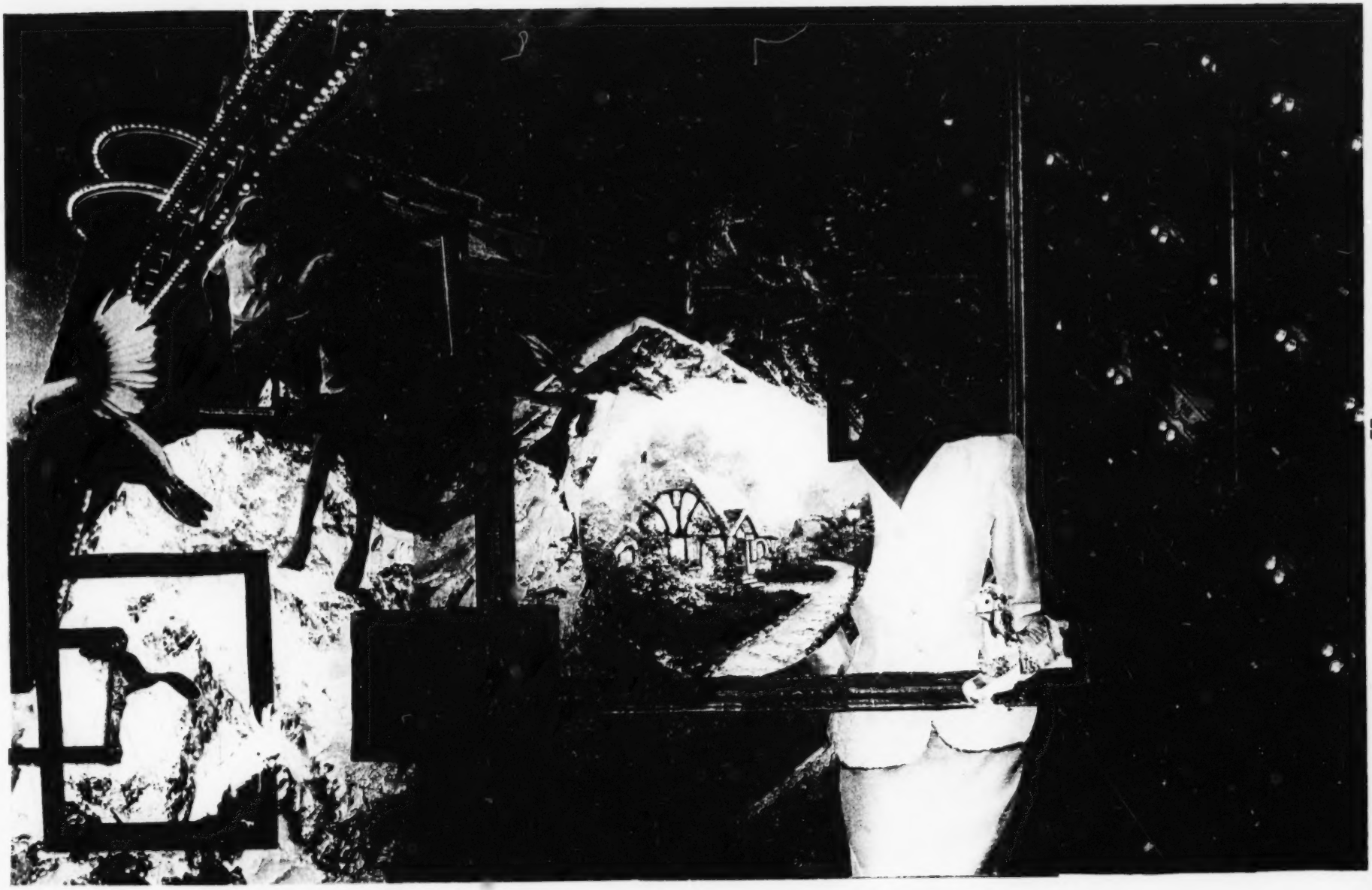

Collage IV: "The importance of context"

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